

# CONNECTIONS

## *The Quarterly Journal*

Volume XIV, Number 1

Winter 2014

---

European and Eurasian Security: Viewpoints from Russia .....	1
The “Rise” of China in the Eyes of Russia: A Source of Threats or New Opportunities? .....	3
<i>Anastasia Solomentseva</i>	
<b>Russia and the Arab Spring .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<i>Alexander Vysotsky</i>	
Russia’s View of Its Relations with Georgia after the 2012 Elections: Implications for Regional Stability .....	65
<i>Nikolai Silaev and Andrei Sushentsov</i>	
The “Color Revolutions” and “Arab Spring” in Russian Official Discourse .....	87
<i>Yulia Nikitina</i>	
Russian Politics in Times of Change: Internal and External Factors of Transformation .....	105
<i>Denis Alexeev</i>	
The Ukrainian Crisis and its Effect on the Project to Establish a Eurasian Economic Union .....	121
<i>Marina Lapenko</i>	
The Transfer of Power in Central Asia and Threats to Regional Stability .....	137
<i>Sergei Y. Shenin</i>	

# Russia and the Arab Spring

*Alexander Vysotsky*\*

## Introduction

The Russian attitude to the Arab Spring—a mixture of skepticism, caution and mistrust—was for a long time poorly understood outside the country. In the West, which initially saw in the Arab Spring the familiar battle between “democracy from below” and “dictatorship from above,” many accused Moscow of sympathizing with outdated authoritarian regimes, even facilitating their behavior, and of being incapable of keeping up with the times.

Later, the situation changed. As democratic revolutions were replaced by civil conflicts (some more peaceful, others more bloody, all exacerbated by ethnic or religious differences) Russia’s conservative position started to find support, both within the Middle East and beyond. The breakthrough Russo-American agreement on Syrian chemical weapons opened the door to the Geneva II talks, bringing factions within Syria to the same talks table, and also helping regulate the Iranian nuclear issue.

To understand the factors that shaped the Russian attitude to the Arab Spring, we need to review recent Russian history and how the situation has changed Russia’s borders. In this article, we will attempt to circumscribe these factors, and offer insights into their true nature.

\*\*\*

The wave of revolutions that swept through the Middle East and North Africa, subsequently labeled the “Arab Spring,” was probably the most significant feature of global politics in 2011. One after another, decrepit Arab authoritarian regimes were replaced by new political forces. The speed of events was so great that outside players could only rush to adapt to the changing realities, as the domino effect swept through the region.

Russia was no exception, though this country preferred to initially distance itself. Moscow understood the irreversibility of the changes in most of the states overrun by the Spring, but chose not to join the West in loudly supporting democratization.

It is widely thought that the turning point in the Russian attitude to the Arab Spring was Libya. After abstaining from voting on UN Security Council Resolution 1973 in March of 2011, which declared the sky over Libya a no-fly zone, Moscow later expressed objections as foreign military interventions began in the country. The resolution that permitted any action to protect the civilian population and the territory they occupied, excluding the introduction of occupying forces,<sup>1</sup> became a foundation of military

---

\* Alexander Vysotsky is Lecturer in the Faculty of International Relations and Russian Foreign Policy, Moscow State University of International Relations (MGIMO).

<sup>1</sup> “Security Council Approves “No-Fly Zone” over Libya, Authorizing “All Necessary Measures” to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favor with 5 Abstentions,” <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10200.doc.htm#Resolution>.

support for the insurgents and regime change. Many in Russia saw in these Western actions an unpleasant echo of Iraq in 2003.

Preventing a similar development of events in Syria became an important Russian foreign policy task. In the Western press and expert circles, the popular explanation was that in Syria, Moscow was holding on to an old ally (Syria was a strong ally of the Soviet Union), as well as a handful of military contracts and bases.<sup>2</sup> However, it is perhaps a mistake to assume that Russian interests were so pragmatic.

Both in Libya, and later in Syria, the Russian position was not dictated by the sole desire to prevent foreign military intervention. More likely, Moscow's policy was influenced by a range of diverse factors. In this article we will attempt to list—in no particular order or hierarchy—these factors, to expose the logical algorithm that produced Russia's position on the Arab Spring. Such a list of underlying factors could be useful in analyzing the motivation driving Russian foreign policy not only in the Middle East, but also in other regions of the world.

### **Factor 1 – Russia and the Islamists**

Russian pundits usually agree that after the Cold War ended, Mid-East affairs became relatively peripheral to Russia's foreign-policy interests. In February 2013, a revised Foreign Policy Concept was published (section IV covers "Regional Priorities"), in which the Middle East not only foots the list, but is entirely covered in three succinct bullet points.<sup>3</sup> This position is also typical for the other declarative policy documents of the 1990's and 2000's.<sup>4</sup>

A reduced Russian involvement in regional affairs is understandable. If during the bipolar confrontation the Middle East served as one of the key arenas, after 1991 the scale of Russia's practical interest contracted here. This was due to the lack of dependence on local energy sources, a low level of trade and economic relations, and Moscow's shift of attention to the perimeter of its own borders – to Europe and, later, the Asia-Pacific Region.

---

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Holly Yan, "Syria allies: Why Russia, Iran and China are standing by the regime," *CNN*, 30 August 2013, available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/29/world/meast/syria-iran-china-russia-supporters>; Holly Yan, "Why China, Russia won't condemn Syrian regime," *CNN*, 5 February 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/02/05/world/meast/syria-china-russia-relations>; "The four reasons Russia won't give up Syria, no matter what Obama does," *Washington Post*, 5 September 2013, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/09/05/the-four-reasons-russia-wont-give-up-syria-no-matter-what-obama-does>.

<sup>3</sup> *RF Foreign Policy Concept*, Approved by RF President V.V. Putin, 12 February 2013, available at [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F) (in Russian).

<sup>4</sup> *RF Foreign Policy Concept 2000*, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/2/25.html>; *RF Foreign Policy Concept 2008*, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/785>; *Russian National Security Strategy to 2020* (approved in 2009), <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>.

In truth, against a backdrop of reduced engagement in one narrow field—security—Russia’s interest in the Middle East had remained constant, if not expanded. This was due to the new risks and national security threats, such as religious extremism and terrorism, which the country had already encountered, mostly in the North Caucasus and Central Asia. For the purposes of this article, it is worthwhile dwelling in greater detail on this phenomenon and the Russian attitude to it which, we believe, later played a significant role in the formation of the Russian take on the Arab Spring. The Spring helped reinforce Islamist forces in the Arab world, many of which (though not all) were, in essence, highly sympathetic to the post-Soviet Islamist terror underground.

Russia’s skeptical attitude to Islamists was continuously evolving. During the Cold War, the USSR supported secular Arab regimes in the Middle East (for example, Nasser’s Egypt, Baathist Syria and Iraq, and Arafat’s PLO). On the opposing, American, side there was not just Israel, but also such countries as Saudi Arabia and the smaller states of the Persian Gulf with strong Islamic traditions. Zigzagging regional policies led to confrontations between Soviet and American allies (e.g. the Saudi-Egyptian confrontation during the civil war in Yemen), while during the Afghanistan war Saudi Arabia was one of the most generous sponsors of the Mujahidin. In the second half of the 1980’s, the kingdom took concerted action to radically reduce oil prices, in order to undermine the Soviet economy.

This situation is described in detail by Egor Gaidar, who was Economy Minister and acting Russian Prime Minister in 1991-1994. In his book *The Soviet Collapse*, this was how he described the oil market:

The war radically changed the geopolitical situation in the Middle East. In 1974, Saudi Arabia decided to impose an embargo on oil supplies to the United States. But in 1979 the Saudis became interested in American protection because they understood that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a first step toward—or at least an attempt to gain—control over the Middle Eastern oil fields.

The timeline of the collapse of the Soviet Union can be traced to September 13, 1985. On this date, Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the minister of oil of Saudi Arabia, declared that the monarchy had decided to alter its oil policy radically. The Saudis stopped protecting oil prices, and Saudi Arabia quickly regained its share in the world market. During the next six months, oil production in Saudi Arabia increased fourfold, while oil prices collapsed by approximately the same amount in real terms.

As a result, the Soviet Union lost approximately \$ 20 billion per year, money without which the country simply could not survive.<sup>5</sup>

The war in Afghanistan, where Soviet troops fought Islamist forces, as well as subsequent wars in Tajikistan and Chechnya, showed Russia the gravity of Islamist terror threat, while Persian Gulf countries continued to sponsor fighters, year after year. Moreover, formal mechanisms for delivering such support (organizations such as the Saudi

---

<sup>5</sup> Yegor Gaydar, “The Soviet Collapse,” 19 April 2007, available at <http://www.aei.org/issue/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/europe/the-soviet-collapse>.

“Kosovo and Chechnya Aid Committee”<sup>6</sup>) were complemented by informal channels of finance and support for anti-Russian forces, that side-stepped control by local authorities. In essence, this meant direct involvement by a number of Mid-East terrorist organizations,<sup>7</sup> and their sponsors, in organizing acts of terror in Chechnya, Dagestan, as well as Tajikistan during the civil war. Furthermore, this meant their participation in organizing acts of terrorism in the European part of Russia.<sup>8</sup> The best-known commanders of foreign fighters in Chechnya came from Saudi Arabia: Huttab, Abu al-Walid, Abu Amar, Abu-Haws and others, who maintained contact with Osama ben Laden and Al Qaeda. Their cooperation began during operations against Soviet troops in Afghanistan,<sup>9</sup> and then continued in Tajikistan and Chechnya.

It is noteworthy that such terrorist tactics were usually typical of the “jihadists.” According to the definition of G. Mirsky, a renowned Russian orientalist, “Jihadists strive to recreate a caliphate, but this is not essential. The main objective is to ensure the dominance of Islam in the world, and to this end we see a merciless fight against non-believers, who will never give up on the intention to destroy Islam.” Moreover, this is a planetary battle. The Salafists have a different worldview: “fundamentalists calling for Moslem society to return to the “Golden Age” when a pure, untarnished Islam dominated, and devout rulers lived in strict accordance with the Koran and Sunnah. This is the source of the slogan of the “Muslim Brotherhood” and that of almost all Salafists: “*Islam is the solution.*”<sup>10</sup>

This situation also illustrates Russia’s differentiated attitude to various Islamist groups. In their fight against terrorism, the Russian special services have mainly dealt with Jihadists, and these groups have made it onto Russian terror lists.<sup>11</sup> Other Islamist groups, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, which have no record of helping fighters or organizing terrorism in Russia, have not been classified as terrorist groups, and the Russian FSB has issued special comments on this point.<sup>12</sup>

As separatists have been driven out of the Republic of Chechnya, a number of Persian Gulf countries, including Qatar and the UAE, have offered shelter to their leaders, giving them the opportunity to continue activities abroad. This has cast a shadow over

---

<sup>6</sup> G. Kosach, “Arab countries and the Independence of Kosovo” (Institute Blizhnego Vostoka, 27 February 2008), available at <http://www.iimes.ru/rus/stat/2008/27-02-08.htm> (in Russian).

<sup>7</sup> “FSB publishes Russian terror list,” *Newsru.com*, 27 July 2006, available [www.newsru.com/russia/27jul2006/terror.html](http://www.newsru.com/russia/27jul2006/terror.html) (in Russian).

<sup>8</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, “How Chechnya Became a Breeding Ground for Terror,” *The Middle East Quarterly* 12:3 (Summer 2005): 57–66, available at <http://www.meforum.org/744/how-chechnya-became-a-breeding-ground-for-terror>.

<sup>9</sup> Timur Teplenin, “Abu Haws: three is definitely a crowd. Muhammad Atef: the last of the triad of ‘Ben Laden’s deputies,” *Utro.ru*, 27 September 2004, <http://www.utro.ru/articles/2004/09/27/355146.shtml> (in Russian).

<sup>10</sup> Georgiy Mirsky, “The Arab Spring – fog and fear,” *Global Affairs*, 1 May 2013, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Arabskaya-vesna--tuman-i-trevoga-15957> (in Russian).

<sup>11</sup> “FSB publishes Russian terror list.”

<sup>12</sup> “Russia does not recognize Hamas or Hezbollah as terrorist organizations,” *Lenta.ru*, 28 July 2006 (in Russian), <http://lenta.ru/news/2006/07/28/list/>.

relations between Moscow and countries in the region, and efforts to identify and eliminate separatist leaders have only added fuel to the fire (the most notorious case was the February 2004 liquidation of Z. Yandarbiev, in Qatar<sup>13</sup>). Russia's relations with Gulf countries began to improve only in the mid 2000's, as local power elites started to distance themselves from supporting terrorists. The 9/11 attacks also played a role – after that point, the US administration chose to fight terrorism across the world, and began to apply pressure on its allies.

The general picture of Russia's attitude to radical Islamists and the Arab Spring would be incomplete without a description of the recent events in Syria and Iraq. Here, in 2011-2014, fighters from the North Caucasus actively participated in battles, alongside the opponents of Al-Assad, and later in the invasion by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) of Iraq. The numbers of terrorists were fairly high – according to media reports, up to a thousand Chechen fighters took part in the Syrian conflict.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently they moved into Iraqi territory, where one of the ISIL commanders turned out to be a Kistinets<sup>15</sup> (Georgian Chechen), Umar ash-Shishani (Tarhan Batirashvili).<sup>16</sup> Such facts clearly influenced Moscow's vision of the true contours, objectives and goals of a large part of the Syrian opposition, as well as their assessment of the risks posed by Western support for the opposition.

The above exploration of recent Soviet and Russian history of relations between Moscow and Islamist movements should shed some light on the reasons for the predominance in the Russian foreign-policy establishment of a negative or suspicious approach to (radical) Islamist forces. This system of views, that formed over a decades-long period of challenges for the country, was one of the underlying factors that shaped Russia's attitude to the Arab Spring, which many in Russia claimed had turned into an "Islamist Autumn."<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> David Holley, "Yandarbiyev Killed by Car Bomb in Qatar," *The Moscow Times*, 16 February 2004, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/yandarbiyev-killed-by-car-bomb-in-qatar/232886.html>.

<sup>14</sup> "Up to a thousand Chechen fighters active in Syria, in one unit, the Al Muhajirin," *Newsru.com*, 19 September 2013, <http://www.newsru.com/world/19sep2013/chechsiria.html> (in Russian); Daria Solovieva, "Chechens Among Jihadists in Syria," *Al-Monitor*, 26 April 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/04/chechen-jihad-syria-boston-bombing.html#>.

<sup>15</sup> "The Kistinets people are against Basher Assad," *Georgia Times*, 21 November 2013, <http://www.georgiatimes.info/articles/97050.html> (in Russian).

<sup>16</sup> "How a Georgian sergeant became a Jihad leader in Iraq," *BBC (Russian Service)*, 8 July 2014, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2014/07/140704\\_isis\\_shishani\\_father\\_interview.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2014/07/140704_isis_shishani_father_interview.shtml) (in Russian).

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, A.B. Podtserod, "Arab Spring or Islamist Autumn?" *Instute Blijnevo Vostoka*, 6 August 2012, <http://www.iimes.ru/rus/stat/2012/06-08-12d.htm> (in Russian); Interview with A. Malashenko, "The Arab Spring has become an Islamist Autumn," *Kommersant.ru*, 8 November 2011, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1810908>; Andrey Fedorchenko, "The Motherland of the Arab Spring and the Process of Islamicization," *MGIMO University*,

## Factor 2 – US Mid-East Policy During Bush Jnr.'s Adventures in Iraq

The restructuring of social and political systems and, more importantly, the psychological watershed in public opinion in the Mid-East of the 2000's, which culminated in the Arab Spring, came under the influence of coinciding internal and external factors. The main internal factor was growing dissatisfaction in different social strata with the socio-economic situation, in parallel with Islamist forces gaining ground. The key external factor was American (more generally, Western) influence, the essence of which was reflected in specific foreign-policy acts, as well as conceptual ideological programs, central among which was the "Greater Middle East" plan.

According to the opinion that formed in Russia, the Arab Spring revolutions were the deferred result of the Mid-East policy of George Bush Jnr. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, "the Arab Spring was the harvest of seeds sown by Bush Jnr., with the concept of the Greater Middle East and democratization of that entire area." Later, he says

The slogans of change and democratization [promoted by the USA] were not agreed by the countries of the region. We have seen a lifetime of revolutions and firmly insist that any changes take place by evolution, resting on the desires of the peoples themselves. The fact that the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa, just like the peoples in any other part of the world, want a better life, want to be respected as citizens in their own states – this is absolutely natural, and we actively support these ambitions. When the "Arab Spring" started to happen, this is what we stated. At the same time, we strongly urge external actors to obey the principle of "do no harm."<sup>18</sup>

These words of Sergei Lavrov, uttered in 2012, are a reference to the first Iraq adventure. The US decision to invade the country not only failed to win the support of Moscow, but also Paris and Berlin, triggering an unheard-of crisis in transatlantic relations. Subsequent attempts at state-building in the occupied country not only collapsed, but provoked a wide-scale and sustained crisis across the region. Any extrapolation of this experience to other countries of the region, even without any direct American involvement, was seen by Russia's leadership as undesirable and dangerous.

It is telling that in the early 2000's, American rhetoric with respect to Iraq was focused on the need to give the region an example of a successful economic and political transition to democracy, at least in one country. This was seen as a first stage in a broader, regional "democratic transition" which, thought Washington, was necessary to silence the threats of religious extremism and terrorism. As George Bush Jnr. declared, "the establishment of a free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will be a watershed point in the global democratic revolution."<sup>19</sup> The Arab Spring showed that these words had

---

17 July 2013, [www.mgimo.ru/news/experts/document240647.phtml](http://www.mgimo.ru/news/experts/document240647.phtml) (in Russian); Mirsky, "The Arab Spring – fog and fear."

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Sergey Lavrov, *Rossisyskaya gazeta*, 24 October 2012, <http://www.rg.ru/2012/10/23/lavrov-poln.html> (in Russian).

<sup>19</sup> Remarks by the President at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 6 November 2003).

been ironically prophetic – the new order was not to be liberal-democratic in the country or region, and there was certainly no drop in the terrorist threat, but a wave of revolutions did indeed rise up in 2011.

At the beginning of the Iraq campaign, the United States declared a basic goal: to build a democratic, federal, parliamentary republic in Iraq, with stably functioning political and socioeconomic systems, with developed legal and civil-political institutions. This was to be achieved by removing from power the previous regime and its supporters (“deBaathization”), holding free elections based on a new constitution, with the eventual inclusion of Iraq into regional integration, along the lines of the Cooperation Council of Arab Gulf States and the construction of stable, conflict-free relations with the USA and their allies (Arab countries of the Persian Gulf and Israel). The material foundation for such a transition was to be income from the oil sector, after rapid infrastructure reconstruction involving a wide circle of international energy companies.

Subsequent events included the overthrow and execution of Saddam Hussein, the absence in Iraq of weapons of mass destruction or evidence of links with Al Qaeda, the interethnic civil war of 2006-2007, growing terrorism, the collapse of the Iraqi economy, millions of refugees and hundreds of thousands of victims amongst the civilian population, the *de facto* collapse of the Iraqi state, the start of a Shiite-Sunni confrontation across the region and, finally, the birth of ISIL. All this demonstrated the undesirability, if not perfidity, of foreign (military) intervention.

To better illustrate the gloomy view that Russia took of the Iraq situation, one need look no further than the words of Satanovsky, director of Russia’s private Middle East Institute: “The development of Iraq after Saddam Hussein’s regime was overthrown cannot be considered a model of democracy; more than this, it is the worst possible advertisement for democracy... Sub-confessional and ethnic groups in the Iraqi population that were contained by the Baathist regime only used their “freedom” to begin oppressing the former “oppressors.” The height of justice in today’s Iraq is ethnic cleansing.”<sup>20</sup>

For Russia and its leaders, Iraq became a model for any attempt by the US and the West to impose any external solutions on unfriendly regimes, circumnavigating the UN Security Council. Western statements about hopes to support the Arab masses’ struggle for democratic rights and freedoms were met with skepticism in Moscow. When the Arab Spring ceased to be exclusively the internal affair of each separate country, the Russian attitude to it changed from mainly neutral to cautiously negative. This is why the events around Libya, where the internal political struggle almost immediately entered a military phase, before foreign “sympathizers” joined in, can be seen as a turning point in Russia’s attitude to the Arab Spring.

### **Factor 3 – Palestine and the Rise of Hamas**

Another argument for this reading of Russia’s position was the experience of US interference in the state-building process in the Palestinian Authority, which led to the vic-

---

<sup>20</sup> Evgeniy Ya. Satanovsky, “Five years of war for oil and democracy,” *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn* 5 (2008): 3–10 (in Russian).

tory of the Hamas movement at parliamentary elections in 2006, and an armed, inter-Palestinian conflict.

This began, as in Iraq, with the ousting of an authoritarian leader after many years in power. Yassir Arafat was the founding father of the PLO and the leader of the Palestine Authority (PA); in Israel and the USA, he had the reputation of an unreliable and undesirable partner. Many linked the likelihood of progress in regulating the Palestine-Israel question with the need for internal political transformations in the Authority itself. This problem was seen as part of a broader context, in which democratic transformations in Arab countries were seen as a precondition to achieving peace with Israel. Russian Ambassador Bovin also mentions this in his description of conversations with Netanyahu.<sup>21</sup>

In this context, it was natural to undermine Arafat's position, forcing him to act under growing internal and external pressure. It is known, for example, that the Hamas movement benefited from a benevolent attitude on the part of Israel and the USA when it first appeared, as it was seen as a counterweight to Arafat.<sup>22</sup> The Islamist factor in the 1980's-1990's was not considered to be a threat to Israel and Western interests in the region, that could be compared to Leftist secular authoritarian regimes. Criticism of Arafat as a terrorist and unreliable negotiator, and the question of his replacement, traditionally remained among the *leitmotifs* of Israeli domestic and foreign policy agendas.

Yassir Arafat's lack of readiness to share power, corruption amongst the administrative structures of the Palestine Authority, and usurpation of all the capital flows in the Authority, all boosted the popularity of this idea, across the world. When George Bush Jr. came to power and the "Greater Middle East" plan emerged, the question of replacing Arafat was integrated into the general logic of Washington's regional policies, and was given the necessary ideological format. The decision was taken to launch the democratization in the Authority to create the preconditions to form a Palestinian state coexisting with Israel. In June of 2002, Bush announced that "Peace requires a new and different Palestinian leadership, so that a Palestinian state can be born."<sup>23</sup>

Growing pressure—international, within Palestine and within his party—forced Arafat to reject attempts at cosmetic reform, which would leave his *de facto* status unchanged. Through long negotiations and consultations with Arafat himself, as well as with Americans and Israelis, by the early 2000's a compromise candidate for the post of the head of the PA was finally found. This was to be a well-known figure from the PLO, Arafat's long-time comrade Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Masen),<sup>24</sup> previously the head of the Palestinian delegation at the Oslo talks.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Alexandr E. Bovin, *5 Years Among Jews and MID-men* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2002), p. 152 (in Russian).

<sup>22</sup> Statement by US Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer, 20 December 2001, <http://www.whale.to/b/andromidas.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Full text of George Bush's speech on Israel and a Palestinian state, *The Guardian*, 25 June 2002, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/jun/25/israel.usa>.

<sup>24</sup> Within Fatah at this time, there was a serious division between the old and new generations of party functionaries. The younger generation—supporters of M. Berguti—insisted on changes in internal structure and procedures of Fatah activities, including democratization of the proc-

Abbas won easily, with 66% of the presidential election votes in January 2005, based on moderate positions on questions of peaceful regulation with the Israelis, and this convinced the international community, but primarily the USA, that the future of democratic state-building in Palestine was rosy. In the eyes of the Bush administration, Palestine had sufficient prerequisites to soon create an independent Palestinian state, and to construct a liberal democratic state model. Bush had previously spoken of this publicly, saying that “An independent, democratic Palestinian state will be created no later than 2009.”<sup>26</sup>

The next critical step in creating such a state after the presidential elections was the articulation of effective legislative authorities and, therefore, holding parliamentary elections. These were slated for January 2006. The Americans had intended that the largest possible number of citizens would participate and, therefore, the entire range of political parties and forces had to be represented. Islamists made it onto the lists.

Israel was categorically against awarding Hamas and other such organizations the right to participate in the parliamentary election campaign. As Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stated on several occasions that Israel “will never agree that this terrorist organization, this armed terrorist organization, will participate in the elections... I don’t see how they can have elections without our help, ... We will make every effort not to help them in their elections.”<sup>27</sup> Sharon also declared that Israel was ready to create the conditions necessary to make it impossible to hold elections.

In this question, however, Washington held the opposite position, ultimately forcing the Israelis to accept the participation of Islamist election candidates. The official American explanations claimed that “A decision as to who can participate in a [Palestinian Legislative Council] election obviously is up to the Palestinian Authority. We do not believe that a democratic state can be built when parties or candidates seek power not through the ballot box but through terrorist activity, as well.”<sup>28</sup> America believed that Palestinian Islamists would be given equal right to participate in parliamentary

---

ess of electing party leaders, and a renewal of the tradition of party congresses, which had not met since 1989.

Fatah’s ‘Old Guard’ resisted these processes, demonstrating at the same time greater loyalty to the USA, and a more flexible approach to talks with Israel. These nuances were particularly salient in 2007, when M. Barguti spoke from an Israeli jail in favor of an initiative of national reconciliation and dialogue with Hamas. Abbas’ supporters were not in agreement with this, and this is how they gained the chance to receive full-fledged US support in their struggle, both in domestic politics, and within the party.

<sup>25</sup> Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas), *The Road to Oslo* (Institute Blizhneva Vostoka, 1996), 306 p.

<sup>26</sup> Mike Allen and Glenn Kessler, “Bush Goal: Palestinian State by 2009,” *Washington Post*, 13 November 2004, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A46469-2004Nov12.html>

<sup>27</sup> Glenn Kessler, “If Hamas Participates, Sharon Says Israel Won’t Aid Palestinian Elections,” *Washington Post*, 17 September 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/16/AR2005091601768.html>.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* National Security Council spokesman Frederick L. Jones II.

elections in the Authority, considering that they were sure to lose the elections. This prediction was apparently based on the results of the presidential campaign.

However, the results of the parliamentary elections in January 2006 were an unpleasant surprise for America. The (now waning) popularity of Abbas did not help Fatah. It turned out that in the thinking of most Palestinians, the party was associated with corruption, ineffectiveness and the failures of previous years, a lack of progress in creating the Palestinian state or resolving the problem of Israeli settlements, or the status of either Jerusalem or refugees. This disappointment brought victory to the opposition, which in Palestine were the Islamists in the Hamas movement. Candidates put forward by the movement won 76 of 132 seats in the parliament. As a renowned Russian Mid-East expert, M. Khrustalev, wrote, "it is telling that even the leaders [of Hamas] did not expect to win."<sup>29</sup>

As a result, according to I. Zvyagelsky, a leading Russian expert on relations between Palestine and Israel, "in the most secular Arab society, an organization has come to power, that claims the goal of not only continuing the war with Israel to the point of victory, but also wishes to islamicize that society." It is well known how events evolved subsequently. Between Fatah and Hamas appeared first a division, then civil war; the Gaza strip and the West Bank started to develop independently of one another, and Gaza once again became the main hotspot in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

Post-revolutionary scenarios for the Arab Spring countries, where Islamists were the unrivalled election winners, prompted the Russian foreign-policy community to draw predictable analogies.<sup>30</sup> Civil wars were indeed triggered in Syria, Libya and Yemen, while the largest (and, traditionally, fairly secular) Arab country, Egypt, hung from a thread. Worrying symptoms could be seen in Lebanon. Concerns were voiced even in such stable countries as Jordan and Tunisia.<sup>31</sup> The sustainability of the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel was now in question.

All these factors together persuaded the Russian establishment of the inexpediency and harmfulness of external support for rapid democratic transformation in problematic Arab countries, where such transformations at best brought Islamists to power, and at worst provoked civil war. Thus, the aggregate experience of American interference in Mid-Eastern affairs in the 2000's, the central symbols of which were post-Hussein Iraq and post-Arafat Palestine, served as a weighty argument in Russia for a more cautious approach to regional affairs.

---

<sup>29</sup> Mark A. Khrustalev, "International aspects of social and political stability," *Mezhdunarodniye protsessy* 17 (May-August 2007), <http://www.intertrends.ru/seventeenth/005.htm> (in Russian).

<sup>30</sup> Elena Suponina, "Arab Spring: The Season for Victory over the Islamists," *Forbes*, 25 December 2012, <http://m.forbes.ru/article.php?id=231831>.

<sup>31</sup> Josef Fellon, "Arab Spring: Expectations and Reality" (Russian Foreign Affairs Council, 4 October 2013), [http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id\\_4=2443#top](http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=2443#top) (in Russian).

## Factor 4 – The Color Revolutions

Strictly speaking, the Arab Spring was not the first wave of revolution to sweep the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was preceded by a chain of events, more spread-out over time, that mainly took place in the post-Soviet space and were labeled the “color revolutions.”

This term is understood to mean a series of non-violent coups in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), Kyrgyzstan (2005), as well as similar attempts in Uzbekistan (2005), Belarus (2006) and Armenia (2008). Some commentators also include the turmoil in Serbia (2000) that led to the resignation of Milosevic, the cedar revolution in Lebanon (2005) and the coups in Moldova (2009).

Any comparison of such different countries and regions, such as the Middle East and East *per se* are doomed to be incomplete. Factors include history, culture, faith, political preferences and standards, and the social make-up of participants. In this article, it would be excessive to study in detail each of the color revolutions; let us simply say that their common denominator is the illegal (but legitimized with Western support) replacement of unpopular leaders, with regimes that declared the goals of moving towards the European Union as an alternative to cooperation with Russia. At the same time, a commitment was declared to build liberal democratic states on the Western model.<sup>32</sup>

The Russian response rapidly switched from caution to a negative attitude. The initial hopes of building constructive relations with the new authorities in neighboring countries were not justified. Russo-Ukrainian authorities under the presidency of Yushchenko fell to an unprecedented low, while Russo-Georgian relations under Saakashvili led to war in 2008 and the termination of diplomatic relations.

But prior to all of this, as early as 2004, President Putin spoke openly of his negative attitude to illegal methods of political struggle with support from abroad:

if we are to speak of post-Soviet space, I am most concerned by attempts to resolve political issues by non-legal means. This is the greatest source of danger. The most dangerous activity is to create a system of endless revolutions – rose revolutions; what will they think of next – blue revolutions? We need to get used to living by the law, and not political feasibility, as defined in some distant place, on behalf of one people or another. Within society itself, clear rules and procedures have to evolve. Of course, we must also be aware that democracies need to be supported and helped, but if we take the path of endless revolutions, there will be nothing good in it for these countries, and their peoples. We will drown the entire post-Soviet space in a chain of never-ending conflicts, that will have fairly tragic consequences.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> This definition neatly covers the “Euromaidan” in Ukraine at the end of 2013/start of 2014, which led to the ousting of President Yanukovich.

<sup>33</sup> A press conference for Russian and foreign journalists, 23 December 2004, [http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2004/12/23/1414\\_type63380type82634\\_81691.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2004/12/23/1414_type63380type82634_81691.shtml).

It is clear that this phrase, almost word-for-word, matches the words of Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov, cited above, speaking eight years later about the Arab Spring.<sup>34</sup>

The very first of the color revolutions—in Georgia—inspired mistrust on the part of the Russian leadership with respect to the true motives of the USA and the West. Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov, acting as intermediary between Shevardnadze and the opposition, stated:

There are plenty of facts that indicate that everything that took place on those days was not spontaneous; it did not happen overnight. There was preparation, in which the US ambassador actively participated, according to the words of Shevardnadze *himself*. The preparation was organized through the Soros Foundation. In the last few months there have been ever more emissaries in Tbilisi, who are on the list of good friends of Eduard [Shevardnadze], above all former US Secretary of State Baker, former Joint Staff Command Shalikashvili, and others. Today, it is becoming ever more obvious that one of the objectives was to convince Shevardnadze to surrender his seat.<sup>35</sup>

It is perhaps salient to remind readers that this took place in 2003 – a time when Russo-American relations, although tarnished by the Iraq affair, nevertheless were at a high, following the first years of cooperation between Putin and Bush Jnr., including cooperation on anti-terror activities and active support for American operations in Afghanistan, including issues of the deployment of American military infrastructure in Central Asia.

Russian suspicions specifically concerned the activities of American government and non-government structures, including the Soros Fund, which Shevardnadze accused of overthrowing him. Suspicions were also expressed about the American embassy, and US Ambassador Miles personally, who had worked in Belgrade before his posting in Tbilisi. As the press then wrote,<sup>36</sup> a great deal was said at the time in Moscow about these bilateral links – not only were the TV images similar, but the very mechanism was. For example, there was talk of external support to consolidate the previously fragmented and motley (and, therefore, weak) opposition in Serbia, and in Georgia. The creation of the Serbia Democratic Opposition block and the promotion of Saakashvili to the forefront of the Georgian opposition took place as a result of active American mediation. The events in both countries developed along the same lines: heated debate over the election results grew into protests by the dissatisfied and calls for “restraint” in handling protesters, culminating in the overthrow of the head of state.

In truth, unlike Milosevic, Shevardnadze benefited from support from Washington for a long time. America was happy to see the Georgian president disassociate himself

---

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Sergei Lavrov, *Rossisyskaya gazeta*, 24 October 2012, <http://www.rg.ru/2012/10/23/lavrov-poln.html>.

<sup>35</sup> “Igor Ivanov stated that the Georgian regime change was prepared with US support,” *Newsru.com*, 8 December 2003, <http://www.newsru.com/russia/08dec2003/ivanov.html> (in Russian).

<sup>36</sup> “A diplomat by the name of Richard Miles,” (Shevardnadze accused Soros of organizing the regime change in Georgia) *Newsru.com*, 1 December 2003, <http://www.newsru.com/world/01dec2003/soros.html#1> (in Russian).

from Moscow, declaring a course for *rapprochement* with the West and requesting Georgian membership in NATO. However, as he lost support, so US sympathies shifted towards young opposition figures.

Another defeat for Russia was the orange revolution of 2004 in Ukraine. Moscow saw the same picture again: Western support facilitated anti-Russian forces taking power illegally. Considering the role and significance of Ukraine not only for Russian foreign policy, but for the self-image and history of the country as a whole, these events became a watershed moment for all Russo-Western relations. Interestingly, another 10 years later, Ukraine is once again the focal point where these relations have reached an acute conflict, which could generate even deeper divisions.

The Russian leadership has unambiguously expressed concerns over such events. Ivanov declared that the spreading practice of color revolutions is

not in the interests of the countries of the CIS, nor of stability in the region, nor international security. I hope that the responsible political forces will not be tempted to push any countries in the CIS onto that path, that led to the change of leadership in Georgia. The responsibility of Western countries is very great here; they must not welcome, as some of them do, what happened in Georgia, and they must assess the events correctly. Next, they must not issue credits to those politicians who have not yet demonstrated that they are supporters of, or committed to, democratic principles.<sup>37</sup>

The *leitmotif* of Russian statements on these issues is accusations against the West of double standards and dishonest play. Citing the example of dubious election procedures in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, Russian officials and President Putin himself have underscored the selectiveness of demands to observe democratic standards. Equally, standards in observing the rights of ethnic minorities. The main issue here is the infringement of rights of Russian-speakers, including in the Baltic states that have joined the EU.

The oddest statement on these issues was made by Vladimir Putin during a press conference in December of 2004. Even then, shortly before the infamous Munich speech of 2007, he gave emotional and frank assessments of world events:

[Recently] elections were held in Afghanistan. We know that these were the first elections in Afghanistan; we supported them, as they were necessary. But was everything so good? Bags of fingerprints of voters were shipped all around the country, and according to our data, they had been shipped in from Pakistan over 2-3 weeks. Who counted those fingerprints, compared them and conducted dactyloscopic analyses? First they said the ink was indelible, then it turned out that it could be washed off.

Elections were also held in Kosovo. Over two hundred thousand Serbs were forced to leave their homes, and could not participate in the elections – and this was considered normal. Now, elections are planned in Iraq. Perhaps this will not happen, but it was one of the ideas discussed. The OSCE will conduct elections control from Jordan. This is a total farce. And when we offered to monitor the elections in the Chechen Republic, then “no, you can’t, because the conditions have not been created,” although there had not been military action for a long time there, and the agencies of power and governance had

---

<sup>37</sup> “Igor Ivanov stated that the Georgian regime change was prepared with US support.”

been created. Yet, in a 100 % occupation of Iraqi territory, elections can be held. Between June and November, 3500 civilians died in Bagdad alone, and in Fallujah there was not even a body count. According to our sources, in just nine cities yesterday, major population centers, there was fighting – yet, no problem, elections can be held, but not in Chechnya! We consider that this is unacceptable, to approach important issues that are of universal interest, in this way.<sup>38</sup>

In the same speech, the Russian president touched on issues of linguistic and cultural rights:

we talk a lot about human rights. Take Macedonia. The EU suggested that in the south of the country, where 20 % of the Albanian population live, that they could participate in the activities of the authorities and governance agencies in the same proportion, of at least 20 %, including in law enforcement agencies. Currently, Romania is preparing to join the EU, and that country will be presented with the same terms for ethnic minorities. Is this good or bad? I think that it is correct, and right. But when we say: “Listen, 60 % of the residents of Riga are Russian, let’s introduce the same standard there,” we are told: “no, you can’t – the situation there is different.” How is it different? Are the people of a different category? It is time to stop flouting common sense.<sup>39</sup>

Returning to the color revolutions, we can say that after Iraq in 2003, they have become a second booby-trap to fundamentally shake Russian trust in America and the West. The same structure, algorithm and consequences of these revolutions became an indirect reason for mistrust of the Arab Spring – if only because the West, in striving to stay “on the right side of history” rushed to declare its support for the Arab revolutions.

In March 2014 President Putin, in a statement to the Federal Assembly to mark the entry of Crimea into Russia, demarcated a direct link between the events in Yugoslavia, the color revolutions, and the Arab Spring. He stated that Western partners had behaved coarsely and unprofessionally, attempting to drive Russia into a corner, and noted that the democracy that the USA was trying to impose had “triggered violence”:

There are constant attempts to drive us into a corner because of our independent position, because we defend interests, because we are not hypocritical ... The USA prefers to forge foreign policy on the principle that “might is right.” They have started to believe they are an exception; they think that only they can be right. That was exactly what happened in Yugoslavia ... There was Afghanistan and Iraq, and the blatant violations of UN Security Council resolutions in Libya. There was the whole series of “color revolutions.” It is clear that people in these countries are tired of tyranny, of poverty, of having no prospects. But these feelings were cynically manipulated. As a result, instead of democracy and freedom, a time of terror has started, violence has flared up. The “Arab Spring” has become an “Arab Winter.”<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> A press conference for Russian and foreign journalists, 23 December 2004, [http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2004/12/23/1414\\_type63380type82634\\_81691.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2004/12/23/1414_type63380type82634_81691.shtml).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> “Putin: the Arab Spring has become an Arab Winter,” *RBK daily*, 18 March 2014, <http://rbcdaily.ru/politics/562949990878702> (in Russian).

Thus, a painful experience of multiple anti-Russian revolutions that took place along the country's borders with Western support, was in part extrapolated by Moscow into its attitude to the Arab Spring. The color revolutions provoked instability, then chaos, and ultimately the loss of human life (amongst Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia in 2008, and in the form of mass victims in Ukraine in 2014, events that reflect the same underlying logic). Moreover, this same pattern of events was repeated on a far more catastrophic scale in the Middle East. This was the pattern of events that helped crystallize Russia's very particular, conservative position, as discussed below.

## **Factor 5 – Questions of Sovereignty and Russian Socio-Political Conservatism**

F. Lukyanov, a renowned Russian journalist on international affairs, described the logic behind Russia's view of the world situation in the following way:

Putin now believes that the modern world is an unforgiving playmate. His attempts to integrate into that world on equal terms, that would benefit Russia, that were evident during his first presidency and which stagnated in his second, brought him to the conclusion of his third term, that integration was futile. First, because they did not want to let him in, and then because of the growing reason that there was no longer anything to integrate into. The system was breaking up, and Putin could sense this acutely, because for him, just like other Russian politicians of his generation, the central life event was the disintegration and collapse of the USSR. Vladimir Putin understands, far better and more deeply than Western politicians, how deeply everything is interconnected and how dangerous it is to take decisive action without pondering the multiple possible consequences. This is the foundation of his sincere commitment to the *status quo*. The same goes for foreign and domestic policies: better not to touch anything, as any form of innovative interference could trigger a collapse.<sup>41</sup>

This important conclusion sheds light not only on Moscow's attitude to the Arab Spring, but also on modern Russian world-views in general, and the logic behind both external and domestic politics. It is important here to remember Russia's own historical experience. Both the authorities and the vast majority of Russian citizens continue to see domestic and world events, including events in the Middle East, through the prism of the end of the 1980's and the 1990's. Another quote of Lukyanov underscores this:

modern Russian society does not believe in revolutions: there is too much turmoil, hopes that turn out to be illusory, and disappointments. The value of stability is shared—so far—by both the elites and the grassroots. The average Russian observer looks on the euphoria of ecstatic crowds with extreme skepticism, knowing that it all usually comes to an end, while the leadership does not hide its disgust at such sights, consciously or subconsciously imagining the destructive forces in their own homeland; therefore any discussions about the “sides of history” provoke, at best, a sense of irony in Russia. The

---

<sup>41</sup> Fedor Lukyanov, “What to expect from the meeting of Russian and US presidents in Northern Ireland” (Russian Foreign Affairs Council, 3 June 2013), [http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/index.php?id\\_4=1929#top](http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/index.php?id_4=1929#top) (in Russian).

results of change in the countries of the Arab Spring do not offer any grounds for optimism – not in any of them.<sup>42</sup>

This view of the world was the product of a long series of events in Russian life (the collapse of the USSR and the beginning of armed conflicts in the post-Soviet space) and the world in the 1990's and the 2000's. The destruction of the bipolar system of international relations did not lead, as some thought, to the “end of history” and the victory of universal liberal ideals. In fact, the opposite is true: with each year the ever-more deeply-interconnected economy of the global village is becoming increasingly chaotic in terms of politics and international law. The United States made a claim for global leadership, but not only failed in that role, but after the failures of Iraq and Afghanistan (against a backdrop of economic difficulties) began to demonstrate an underlying desire to isolate themselves from the regulation of international problems. Actual policy-making was largely replaced by empty political correctness and the imitation of activity. Across the world, people were disappointed by the caliber of politicians and their ability to take and implement decisions. With respect to Russia, this was most clearly demonstrated in the demonization of President Putin in the West – an attempt to describe Russian behavior in terms of mania and inadequacy; as former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger eloquently wrote, “For the West, the demonization of Vladimir Putin is not a policy; it is an alibi for the absence of one.”<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, the world was descending further into chaos. The norms and rules that served as a foundation for the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries slipped into oblivion, and no new ones appeared to replace them. This was particularly relevant for the issue of state sovereignty, a basic concept for international relations since the times of Westphalia. The erosion of sovereignty, which was clearly evident in the cases of Kosovo and Iraq, and during the color revolutions, was categorically unacceptable to Moscow. The significance of domestic policy steps by the Russian authorities in the 2000's, from ideological concepts such as “sovereign democracy” to a number of legislative initiatives, including control over foreign funding of NGOs and additional regulation of the media, was a part of the sustained effort to prevent attempts at foreign-policy interference from abroad.

The chronicles of the Arab Spring offer numerous opportunities for analysis of this Russian worldview. When in 2011 the 30 year-old regime of Mubarak collapsed, the Russian reaction, according to Lukyanov, “amazed the world by its slowness. The long-time president of Egypt had never been any particular friend of Moscow, remaining completely loyal to Washington. So there was no reason for the Kremlin or MFA to shed any tears, but the general disgust of revolutions, now inherent to the modern Russian establishment, meant they could not welcome this triumph of popular will. Both Western and Arab colleagues shrugged in unison: surely one should not be so inflexible, and not

---

<sup>42</sup> Fedor Lukyanov, “Let it be...how it used to be,” *Ogonek*, 15 July 2013, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2219495> (in Russian).

<sup>43</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, “To Settle the Ukraine Crisis, Start at the End,” *Washington Post*, 5 March 2014, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/henry-kissinger-to-settle-the-ukraine-crisis-start-at-the-end/2014/03/05/46dad868-a496-11e3-8466-d34c451760b9\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/henry-kissinger-to-settle-the-ukraine-crisis-start-at-the-end/2014/03/05/46dad868-a496-11e3-8466-d34c451760b9_story.html).

think about the future. The American interpretation was, as usual, more colorful: Russia was on the “wrong side of history,” apprehensive of democratic breakthroughs in the Middle East.”<sup>44</sup>

Subsequent events showed, at the very least, the justification for Russian inertia. The new Egyptian president, Morsi, elected in universal, democratic voting in June 2012, a representative of the Muslim Brotherhood, managed to keep the seat for just one year. He quickly turned large parts of the Egyptian population against him, including the liberal youth, previously the main driving force behind anti-Mubarak protests at Tahrir, the Copts, and moderately religious Egyptians. The Egyptian military took advantage of this and once again “heard the voice of the people” and removed Morsi from power, just as Mubarak had been ousted. A little while later, in May 2014, a new round of presidential elections was won by the Egyptian Defense Minister, General Abdel Fattah as-Sisi, with 97 % of the vote, according to official sources.<sup>45</sup>

In this way, the country went through a full circle, eventually returning to square one: an authoritarian, military regime, and austere repression of Islamists (the Muslim Brotherhood were once again outlawed) that was despised by a liberal minority. In the same two years, the already weak Egyptian economy deteriorated yet further, poverty and unemployment increased, the level of violence in society increased, and the tourism industry suffered.<sup>46</sup>

The Egyptian military coup was apparently not condemned by the West: everyone understood the true reasons, but no-one wanted to add their voices to those of protesting Qatar extremists,<sup>47</sup> yet no-one supported the coup, either, as this would hardly have confirmed the idea of being on the “right side” of history.

Predictably, the chain of Egyptian revolutions and coups did not inspire any Russian enthusiasm. President Putin expressed concerns about the possibility of civil war breaking out in the country,<sup>48</sup> but very quickly restored contacts with the new Egyptian leadership, that came to power as a result of national elections. In the short period of time that Morsi spent in power, Vladimir Putin held talks with him on two occasions (in March and April of 2013).<sup>49</sup> Later, he continued the dialogue with as-Sisi, as presiden-

---

<sup>44</sup> Lukyanov, “Let it be ... how it used to be.”

<sup>45</sup> “Egyptian ex-Defense Minister As-Sisi wins 96.91 % of presidential election votes,” *ITAR-TASS*, 3 June 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/1236051> (in Russian).

<sup>46</sup> “Arab spring economies. Unfinished business,” *The Economist*, 4 February 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21546018>.

<sup>47</sup> “Riyadh asks GCC states to condemn Qatar’s actions in Egypt and Yemen,” *Middle East Monitor*, 25 November 2013, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/8496-riyadh-asks-gcc-states-to-condemn-qatars-actions-in-egypt-and-yemen>.

<sup>48</sup> “Russia’s Putin says Egypt moving towards civil war,” *Reuters*, 7 July 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/07/us-egypt-protests-russia-idUSBRE96607820130707>.

<sup>49</sup> “In the margins of the BRICS summit, Vladimir Putin met with Muhammed Morsi,” *Vesti.ru*, 29 March 2013, <http://www.vesti.ru/videos?vid=495347>; Kira Latuhina, “Sochi, palm-trees, pyramids,” *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 22 April 2013, <http://www.rg.ru/2013/04/22/putin.html> (in Russian).

tial candidate and then as president, when the latter visited Russia both immediately after the coup,<sup>50</sup> and his election victory.<sup>51</sup>

In the cases of both Egypt and Tunisia, the central issue for Russia—sovereignty—did not make it onto the agenda. There was no mention of military invasion from abroad or other forms of interference in the internal affairs of these states. The situation with Libya and Syria, whose sovereignty was in question, was different: “The fact that during the Libyan campaign Moscow surprised everyone by abandoning its usual position of non-interference, did not signal the start of a new trend but, rather, catalyzed the extremely harsh and uncompromising position that followed. Whatever may have guided President Medvedev, taking the decision not to block intervention by force, the result merely persuaded all players how erroneous this step was. The course on the Syrian issue, which did not shift one iota over the past two and a half years, was intended to demonstrate once and for all the model in which external forces decide who is “right” in a civil war, and then help the “right side” to win – but it is not going to be allowed any more.”<sup>52</sup>

It is clear from this explanation that the Russian approach is broader than the Arab Spring and the Spring itself is not the key issue. The core question is which formats and mechanisms for regulating conflicts are acceptable to Moscow. As the situation in Syria showed Russia, frequently accused of excessive pragmatism and reluctance to compromise on commercial benefit, was ready to defend this principled approach to the bitter end, regardless of the cost.

### **Factor 6 – Civil War in Syria and the ‘Crystallization’ of Russia’s Position**

From the start of the civil war in Syria the press, including leading Western publications, carried plenty of material about Russian researchers explaining the logic of Moscow’s actions on the Syrian issue. In order not to repeat the theses mentioned previously, let us restrict ourselves to one example, a series of materials by Russian authors in the *New York Times*, including the articles of Dmitri Trenin,<sup>53</sup> director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, and R. Pukhov, the head of the Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, which commands respect in Russia.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Jonathan Marcus, “Putin supported Sisi: the Kremlin’s Egyptian gambit,” *BBC (Russian service)*, 14 February 2014, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2014/02/140213\\_sisi\\_russia\\_egypt\\_gambit.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2014/02/140213_sisi_russia_egypt_gambit.shtml) (in Russian).

<sup>51</sup> “In Sochi, Putin reached agreement with Egyptian president to increase agricultural shipment to Russia by 30%,” *Newsru.com*, 12 August 2014, <http://www.newsru.com/russia/12aug2014/putinsisi.html> (in Russian).

<sup>52</sup> Lukyanov, “Let it be ... how it used to be.”

<sup>53</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “Why Russia Supports Assad,” *The New York Times*, 9 February 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/10/opinion/why-russia-supports-assad.html?\\_r=2&partner=rss&emc=rss](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/10/opinion/why-russia-supports-assad.html?_r=2&partner=rss&emc=rss).

<sup>54</sup> Ruslan Pukhov, “Why Russia Is Backing Syria,” *The New York Times*, 6 July 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/07/opinion/why-russia-supports-syria.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/07/opinion/why-russia-supports-syria.html?_r=0).

In Syria, as if under a magnifying glass, we see the two factors described above, each influencing the formation of Russian policy with respect to the Arab Spring, while the Syrian precedent itself was the quintessential manifestation of this policy in real life.

The beginning of the Syrian conflict did not inspire optimism regarding the prospects of President Assad for remaining in power. Most voices, including those in Russia, discussed how long he would manage to remain in power, and whether he would run from the country – the only way to avoid the fate of Colonel Kaddafi. In 2012, the Russian MFA saw the fall of the Assad regime as highly probable,<sup>55</sup> and Minister Lavrov saw fit to underscore that Moscow had no plans to offer the Syrian president asylum.<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, since the very beginning of the Syrian crisis, Russia had occupied a position to which it later remained loyal. The core message was that the fate of Syria was to be decided by the people of Syria themselves; interference from outside was inadmissible, and the only possible path to regulation was an inclusive national dialogue and talks between the authorities and the opposition, while the departure of Assad could not be a precondition of such talks, as he was the lawfully-elected president.

2012 and January to September 2013 saw the greatest tension around the defense of this position. It found no sympathy in the Middle East (Assad had made plenty of enemies amongst Arab leaders, and placed most hope on Iran), or in the West. Russia was criticized for blocking the anti-Syrian resolutions of the UN Security Council and for indifference to the suffering of the Syrian people.<sup>57</sup> Moscow's arguments, that the key role in the armed struggle against the Syrian regime was played by radical Islamists using terrorist tactics, whilst conducting ethnic and religious cleansing, initially went unheard abroad.

The most serious challenge was the incident in August of 2013, when the West unanimously accused the Syrian authorities of using chemical weapons. The fact that President Obama had called the use of WMD in Syria a “red line,”<sup>58</sup> crossing which would inevitably trigger a military response, left no-one doubting that Syria would be struck in September or October 2013.<sup>59</sup> It was clear that the affair would go beyond the destruction of chemical weapons stocks, and the issue would follow the Libyan scenario,

---

<sup>55</sup> “Russian MID does not rule out insurgent victory in Syria,” *RT.com*, 13 December 2012, <http://russian.rt.com/inotv/2012-12-13/MID-Rossii-ne-isklyuchaet-pobedi> (in Russian).

<sup>56</sup> “Russia does not intend to offer Assad shelter, states Lavrov – he has friends in Europe,” *Newsru.com*, 28 December 2012, <http://www.newsru.com/russia/28jul2012/noassad.html> (in Russian).

<sup>57</sup> “Suffering children in Syria: Cameron accuses Russia and China,” *BBC (Russian service)*, 27 September 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2012/09/120926\\_cameron\\_un\\_blasts\\_russia.shtm](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2012/09/120926_cameron_un_blasts_russia.shtm) (in Russian).

<sup>58</sup> Glenn Kessler, “President Obama and the ‘red line’ on Syria’s chemical weapons,” *The Washington Post*, 6 September 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2013/09/06/president-obama-and-the-red-line-on-syrias-chemical-weapons/>.

<sup>59</sup> “Politologists: A strike against Syria is inevitable,” *Gazeta.ru*, 3 September 2013, [http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/video/politologi\\_udar\\_po\\_sirii\\_neizbezhen.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/video/politologi_udar_po_sirii_neizbezhen.shtml) (in Russian); “A strike will be carried out against Syria,” *Russian Foreign Affairs Council*, 28 August 2013, [http://russiacouncil.ru/inner/?id\\_4=2258#top](http://russiacouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=2258#top) (in Russian).

including military support for the insurgents and the overthrow of the government. The absurdity of the situation, both in Syria and in the Arab Spring in general, was emphasized by Lavrov on 26 August 2013 (on the eve of the planned invasion) when he called an extraordinary press conference on the Syrian issue:

It is very difficult to understand the true motives that guide our Western colleagues when, conducting destructive interventions in Iraq and Libya, and without resolving other problems in the Arab Spring to help these same states achieve stability, as well as inter-confessional, interethnic peace, they start making statements at the highest level, which are truly stunning, given the vagueness of the course they are proposing...

As regards the strategy of our Western partners, please note: a few years ago one of the most popular refrains, addressed to us and to China, was to choose “the right side of history.” In the past six-to-twelve months I don’t remember the topic of the “right side of history” being mentioned any more...many key players have taken one side, acting on the principle “the winner is always right,” forgetting about old alliances, and placing bets on those that they considered to be the winners. Then, the winning side once again turns into the loser. This is what is called *ad hoc* policy-making. But we need policies to be comprehensive and logical.<sup>60</sup>

The fact that the intervention in Syria did not take place demonstrated that the West, apparently, had understood: the war in Syria had ceased to be a conflict between the authorities and the opposition, and had turned into an interdenominational bloodbath. The authorities confronted the opposition, the secular opposition ended up fighting the radical opposition, while the country itself became an arena of clashes between external forces, mainly from Saudi Arabia and Iran. Armed interference by the West in such a conflict could do no more than further confuse an already complicated situation.

Subsequent events are well known. Moscow’s position on Syria and the sophisticated combination of moves proposed to solve the problem of Syrian chemical weapons were virtually the first example of genuine multi-lateral diplomacy in the past 20 years. As a result, this success made it possible to organize Geneva II and achieve progress in six-party negotiations with Iran. The refusal to invade Syria and the achievement of agreements on the Iranian nuclear program signaled a degree of normalization in Americano-Iranian relations.<sup>61</sup>

The Russo-American agreement on Syrian chemical weapons made it possible to contain the Syrian crisis. The Assad regime was left standing, and the jihadists from Al Qaeda and ISIL who fought it turned their attention to Iraq, still weak after the American invasion and unable to build functioning state institutions or an effective army. The enhanced effectiveness of international efforts to assist the authorities in Baghdad or Erbil in their fight against ISIL was the most topical issue of Middle-East security at the time of writing this article.

---

<sup>60</sup> Sergei Lavrov: press conference in Moscow, 26 August 2013, [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/366D32761BA7D4F244257BD300546B19](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/366D32761BA7D4F244257BD300546B19) (in Russian).

<sup>61</sup> Chelsea J. Carter, “It’s a three-decade first: Presidents of U.S., Iran talk directly, if only by phone,” *CNN*, 28 September 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/27/politics/us-iran>.

The absurdity of the situation, in which the West fought in Mali and Iraq with the exact same people they supported in Libya and Syria, against a backdrop of growing chaos in the Middle East, was yet further proof for Moscow of the validity of its conservative position:

In Mali the French lent a hand in the fight against terrorists – groups that France had armed and supported in Libya ... Inflating illegal armed groups with weapons creates colossal threats. One should not simply declare “let’s forget about everything else – Syria has problems, let’s help it.” It is just a short while ago that we were working with Libya in just the same way, and before that – Iraq, without a thought for the consequences that this creates across the Muslim world ... we can already see the terrible consequences of previous interference in conflicts in the same region ... In Libya the central authorities do not exert control over huge swaths of their own country, while the fighters that helped overthrow Kaddafi have brought their weapons to Mali, although they are already feared in other countries, such as Niger and Chad.

Take a look at Iraq, where dozens of lives are lost each day, and hundreds are wounded due to bloody acts of terrorism. What is happening in Syria is a real civil war. The government is fighting the so-called “Free Syrian Army” and with a growing number of terrorists affiliated with Jabat an-Nusra, ISIS and other terrorist groups. The Free Syrian Army occasionally clashes with terrorist groups. If anyone thinks that after bombing the Syrian military infrastructure to create an empty battlefield for the regime’s enemies to gain victory, then everything will be over – this is an illusion. Even if there will be such a victory, the civil war will continue.<sup>62</sup>

So, as Lukyanov notes, “as early as 2012 there was just one, universal opinion, that Russia was the unquestionable loser of the Arab Spring. Her last allies, inherited from the USSR, are departing, and their predecessors are hostile to Moscow, while those with neutral positions have nothing to offer Moscow. Today, all this looks different.” A year after the planned invasion of Syria that never took place, even in the West people have started to recognize how right Russia’s position was (although such voices are subdued, as relations between Russia and the West had by this time deteriorated beyond recognition).<sup>63</sup>

The same took place with respect to Moscow’s attitude to the Arab capitals. Differences between Russia and the Arab states in their attitudes to the Syrian crisis were gradually surpassed by a more constructive agenda, according to which Russia and the countries of the region noticeably upgraded the intensity of bilateral dialogue, whilst also expanding the scope of such talks. The countries of the region were appreciative of Russia’s logical alternative to the Western position, and quickly made 180-degree changes in their public discourse: Russia had changed from a country that supported the “dying, blood-spattered Syrian regime because of Empire mania,” to become a popular partner inspiring high expectations.

---

<sup>62</sup> Sergei Lavrov: press conference in Moscow.

<sup>63</sup> Ishaan Tharoor, “Was Putin right about Syria?” *The Washington Post*, 22 August 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/08/22/was-putin-right-about-syria>.

The unprecedented intensity of contacts between Moscow and Riyadh, Teheran, Tel Aviv, Ankara, Damascus, Cairo and Ramallah, against a backdrop of close cooperation with the USA in almost all aspects of the regional agenda, even at the height of the Ukrainian crisis (Syrian internal talks, Israelo-Palestinian regulation, and dialogue with Iran) soon became a tangible factor shaping the new Middle East.

Meanwhile, Moscow is continuing to maintain a completely conservative approach to Mid-East affairs, supposing that, in the realities of this region, attempts to sponsor rapid change only exacerbate old problems and create new ones. It turns out that, in a period of apparent chaos on the international arena, such a position meets with growing understanding, if not outright approval.

### **Russo–American Relations: Antagonism or Reset 2.0?**

The instability that has swept the Middle East from the beginning of the Arab Spring continued to deepen in 2014. In addition, another source of world tension has sprung up: the crisis around Ukraine. Initially, this was just another example of a failed state: the collapse of a fragile state organism, typified by previously concealed interregional differences that became evident due to a systemic economic collapse. The case of Ukraine subsequently eclipsed the outrages of ISIL in Iraq, the Israeli operation in Gaza, and yet another wave of tension in the South-East China Sea. The unprecedented deterioration of Russo-Western relations and the subsequent mutual launch of sanctions forced the whole world to talk of a return to the times of the Cold War.

Interestingly, this new situation did not affect Russo-American cooperation on Mid-East issues for some time. Moscow and Washington continued to jointly support internal Syrian talks, as well as the far more productive contacts of the Iran six-party talks, while the Middle-East quartet continued its work. However, as the two countries entered into a cycle of permanent mutual rejection, it became clear that no more joint initiatives of significance—such as the Syrian chemical weapons deal—were to be expected. The familiar logic of the “zero sum game” dictated a very different kind of action in any arbitrary international situation.

The feeling of an imminent return to the old ways is currently predominant in Russia and in the USA. In Russian society, there is now an ever-wider understanding that the Western sanctions of 2014 are aimed not only at undermining the national economy and doling out “punishment” for Crimea, but have the ultimate goal of regime change in Russia.<sup>64</sup> In such a situation, there can hardly be any hope of constructive cooperation.

In 2007, Russian Foreign minister Lavrov, speaking on a very different issue, wrote:

If we analyze the ideological inertia that brought the USA to “transformative democracy,” it is clear that between the foreign policy efforts of Washington and Moscow there is a wide gap. One can only suppose that herein lies the problem [of Russo-American relations], or at least a large part of it. Russia has had more than her share of revolutions – for us, most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was tied up in one revolution or another. The past century was

---

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, the interview with Sergey Karaganov in *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 24 April 2014, <http://www.rg.ru/2014/04/23/karaganov-site.html> (in Russian).

a sort of purgatory for European civilization, overcoming evil by driving out one's ideological "demons" – the various extremist products of European liberal thinking. It is for this reason that Russia will not lend its support on any ideologized project, and is all the more determined not to adopt one that comes from abroad.

The Westphalian system, which it has become fashionable to criticize in some circles, placed differences in values outside of the relations between states. In this sense, the Cold War was one big step backwards. Should we now continue to move backwards on this path, that can only lead to confrontation?<sup>65</sup>

For the Middle East, where conflicts even during the "real" Cold War had a unique dynamic and did not vanish either in the 1990's or in the 2000's, the climate in Russo-American relations plays a secondary role. Local leaders have long since learned how to make gains playing on the differences between the great powers. Here, all parties have their own interests, yet a balance between them is yet to be found; moreover, it is up to the countries of the region to find it. External players will be unable to help even if they wish to: the degree of their influence on the actual balance of power is falling irreversibly, even if it may appear that something can be achieved by a sudden surge of efforts.

Meanwhile, Russo-American antagonism, if it is predominant, closes the doors on diplomatic solutions such as that in Syria. The production of such solutions, much like their implementation, is possible only if the two countries can reach agreement. In the current situation, the elites of both countries will tend to avoid compromises with their opponent, even if the arguments of the latter are well-justified. The readiness to listen to the opinion of the opposite side will diminish.

In June 2014, speaking before the members of the Russian Foreign Affairs Council, Sergei Lavrov attempted to produce a general assessment of the history of Russo-Western relations over the past two decades and expressed the hope that the Ukrainian crisis could become a sort of "refreshing storm" for these relations.<sup>66</sup> This appears unlikely. However, given sufficient political will, and considering the lack of predictability in the world situation today, a second, deeper "reset" cannot be excluded.

In this article, we have attempted to describe not only the attitude of Russia to the phenomenon of the Arab Spring, but also offer a portrait of the events, phenomena and processes, which informed the current Russian worldview over the past two and a half decades, and without which any understanding of Moscow's position toward the Arab Spring will be incomplete.

During the time of bipolar international relations, Soviet-American antagonism supported that stable axis, around which international life was built, developing in a predictable fashion. Today's world has changed much in the last decades: Europe's role is diminished, the economic centre of gravity and the potential for conflict have both shifted to the East, and the international system no longer has a reliable point of support.

---

<sup>65</sup> Sergei Lavrov, "Russian Deterrence: Back to the Future?" *Rossiya v globalnoi politike*, 22 August 2007, [http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n\\_9236](http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_9236) (in Russian).

<sup>66</sup> Statement by Russian Foreign minister Lavrov at a meeting with members of the Russian Foreign Affairs Council, Moscow, 4 June 2014, [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/412C7BA2A5A1E66544257CED0059D4DF](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/412C7BA2A5A1E66544257CED0059D4DF).

In this world, Russo-American confrontation cannot be a source of greater stability or predictability. More likely, this will simply become one more daub in the chaotic and muddled portrait of the modern international environment.

## **Bibliography**

"Interview with Sergey Karaganov." Rossiyskaya gazeta (2014).

"Interview with Sergey Lavrov." Rossisyskaya gazeta (2012).

"The four reasons Russia won't give up Syria, no matter what Obama does." Washington Post (2013).

A diplomat by the name of Richard Miles (Shevardnadze accused Soros of organizing the regime change in Georgia). Vol. 1 December 2003. Newsru.com, 2003.

A press conference for Russian and foreign journalists., 2004.

Allen, Mike, and Glenn Kessler. "Bush Goal: Palestinian State by 2009." Washington Post (2004).

Arab spring economies. Unfinished business. Vol. 4 February 2012. The Economist, 2012.

Bovin, Alexandr E.. 5 Years Among Jews and MID-men. Moscow: Zakharov, 2002.

Carter, Chelsea J.. It's a three-decade first: Presidents of U.S., Iran talk directly, if only by phone. Vol. 28 September 2013. CNN, 2013.

Egyptian ex-Defense Minister As-Sisi wins 96.91 % of presidential election votes. Vol. 3 June 2014. ITAR-TASS, 2014.

Fedorchenko, Andrey. The Motherland of the Arab Spring and the Process of Islamicization. MGIMO University, 2013.

Fellon, Josef. Arab Spring: Expectations and Reality. Vol. 4 October 2013. Russian Foreign Affairs Council, 2013.

FSB publishes Russian terror list. Vol. 27 July 2006. Newsru.com, 2006.

Gaydar, Yegor. The Soviet Collapse. Vol. 19 April 2007., 2007.

George Bush's speech on Israel and a Palestinian state. The Guardian, 2002.

Holley, David. "Yandarbiyev Killed by Car Bomb in Qatar." The Moscow Times (2004).

How a Georgian sergeant became a Jihad leader in Iraq. Vol. 8 July 2014. BBC (Russian Service), 2014.

Igor Ivanov stated that the Georgian regime change was prepared with US support. Vol. 8 December 2003. Newsru.com, 2003.

In Sochi, Putin reached agreement with Egyptian president to increase agricultural shipment to Russia by 30%. Vol. 12 August 2014. Newsru.com, 2014.

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL

In the margins of the BRICS summit, Vladimir Putin met with Muhammed Morsi. Vol. 29 March 2013. Vesti.ru, 2013.

Kessler, Glenn. "If Hamas Participates, Sharon Says Israel Won't Aid Palestinian Elections." Washington Post (2005).

Kessler, Glenn. "President Obama and the 'red line' on Syria's chemical weapons." The Washington Post (2013).

Khrustalev, Mark A.. "International aspects of social and political stability." Mezhdunarodniye protsessy 17 (2007).

Kissinger, Henry A.. "To Settle the Ukraine Crisis, Start at the End." Washington Post (2014).

Kosach, G.. Arab countries and the Independence of Kosovo. Institute Blizhnego Vostoka, 2008.

Latuhina, Kira. "Sochi, palm-trees, pyramids." Rossiyskaya gazeta (2013).

Lavrov, Sergei. Russian Deterrence: Back to the Future?. Vol. 22 August 2007. Rossiya v globalnoi politike, 2007.

Lukyanov, Fedor. "Let it be ... how it used to be." Ogonek (2013).

Lukyanov, Fedor. What to expect from the meeting of Russian and US presidents in Northern Ireland. Russian Foreign Affairs Council, 2013.

Marcus, Jonathan. Putin supported Sisi: the Kremlin's Egyptian gambit. Vol. 14 February 2014. BBC (Russian service), 2014.

Mazen, Abu. The Road to Oslo. Institute Blizhneva Vostoka, 1996.

Mirsky, Georgiy. The Arab Spring – fog and fear. Vol. 1 May 2013. Global Affairs, 2013.

Podtserod, A.B.. Arab Spring or Islamist Autumn?. Instute Blijnevo Vostoka.

Politologists: A strike against Syria is inevitable. Vol. 3 September 2013. Gazeta.ru, 2013.

Pukhov, Ruslan. "Why Russia Is Backing Syria." The New York Times (2012).

Putin: the Arab Spring has become an Arab Winter. Vol. 18 March 2014. RBK daily, 2014.

Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy. U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2003.

RF foreign policy concept 2000. Foreign policy and the security of contemporary Russia. 1991-2002. Vol. 4. Moscow, 2002.

- RF Foreign Policy Concept In Approved by RF President V.V. Putin., 2013.
- Riyadh asks GCC states to condemn Qatar's actions in Egypt and Yemen. Vol. 25 November 2013. Middle East Monitor, 2013.
- Russia does not intend to offer Assad shelter, states Lavrov – he has friends in Europe. Vol. 28 December 2012. Newsru.com, 2012.
- Russia does not recognize Hamas or Hezbollah as terrorist organizations. Vol. 28 July 2006. Lenta.ru, 2006.
- Russia's Putin says Egypt moving towards civil war. Vol. 7 July 2013. Reuters, 2013.
- Russian MID does not rule out insurgent victory in Syria. Vol. 13 December 2012. RT.com, 2012.
- Satanovsky, Evgeniy Ya.. "Five years of war for oil and democracy." *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn* 5 (2008): 3-10.
- Security Council Approves "No-Fly Zone" over Libya, Authorizing "All Necessary Measures" to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favor with 5 Abstentions., 2011.
- Sergei Lavrov: press conference in Moscow., 2013.
- Solovieva, Daria. Chechens Among Jihadists in Syria. Vol. 26 April 2014. Al-Monitor, 2014.
- Statement by Russian Foreign minister Lavrov at a meeting with members of the Russian Foreign Affairs Council. Moscow, 2014.
- Statement by US Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer., 2001.
- Suffering children in Syria: Cameron accuses Russia and China. Vol. 27 September 2012. BBC (Russian service), 2012.
- Suponina, Elena. Arab Spring: The Season for Victory over the Islamists. Vol. 25 December 2012. Forbes, 2012.
- Teplenin, Timur. Abu Havs: three is definitely a crowd. Muhammad Atef: the last of the triad of 'Ben Laden's deputies. Vol. 27 September 2004. Utro.ru, 2004.
- Tharoor, Ishaan. "Was Putin right about Syria?" *The Washington Post* (2014).
- The Kistinets people are against Basher Assad. Vol. 21 November 2013. *Georgia Times*, 2013.
- Trenin, Dmitri. "Why Russia Supports Assad." *The New York Times* (2012).
- Up to a thousand Chechen fighters active in Syria, in one unit, the Al Muhajirin. Vol. 19 September 2013. Newsru.com, 2013.

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL

Vidino, Lorenzo. "How Chechnya Became a Breeding Ground for Terror." *The Middle East Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (2005): 57-66.

Yan, Holly. *Syria Allies: Why Russia, Iran and China are Standing by the Regime*. CNN.com, 2013.

Yan, Holly. *Why China, Russia won't condemn Syrian regime*. Vol. 5 February 2012. CNN, 2012.